



## CSD *News Release*

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### **'SALES' ARE NOT ALWAYS WHAT THEY SEEM CONSUMER DEPARTMENT WARNS**

As we move into the busiest shopping season of the year, the Miami-Dade County Consumer Services Department (CSD) is warning shoppers about enticements that are not always what they seem.

"This is the time of year when holiday and pre-season sales begin to flourish," notes Consumer Advocate, Leonard Elias. He says many retailers use words such as "sale," "discounted," "reduced," "wholesale," and "below cost" to attract customers into their stores, leading consumers to believe they are paying a reduced price, when often they are not.

"For example," he notes, "some items seem to be on sale almost all the time, making it extremely difficult for the average shopper to determine whether the sales price is really a bargain."

"Because merchants devise increasingly enticing ways of promoting their merchandise," Elias says, "consumers have to make an extra effort to determine whether these sales pitches really represent a bargain."

The Consumer Services Department offers the following tips:

1. A sale must really be a sale. If a "sale" runs everyday of the year, the "sale price" is really the business's regular price.
2. A sale price can only be advertised if it represents an actual and authentic price reduction from the seller's customary retail price, or if it represents a savings from the regular price charged by other sellers in the trading area.
3. Discounted introductory offers or other references to higher future prices must, in fact, be followed by higher prices.
4. Price reductions must be significant, at least five to ten percent.

5. A general offer of price reductions cannot apply only to a small number of items in the store.

6. "Suggested retail" and "list" prices must refer to prices in which a substantial number of goods have been sold in the trade area. Otherwise, the price reference is fictitious and the consumer isn't really benefiting from a cost savings.

"The best advice is to be an informed consumer. Know what you want in advance, be familiar with the regular price, and shop for the best deal," Elias says

To report a phony sale, or an instance of deceptive or misleading advertising, consumers should call the Miami-Dade Consumer Services Department Consumer Hotline at (305) 375-3677.

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*The Miami Dade Consumer Services Department is an agency of Miami-Dade County government that protects consumers through complaint mediation, business regulation, and consumer education. The Department operates the Consumer Hotline (305) 375-3677, a central telephone number for consumer complaints and information.*